

MISSION

Manage the CPNA so that indigenous species interact within a dynamic and fully functioning system in perpetuity while conserving unique natural and cultural resources and maintaining opportunities for compatible scientific research, cultural, social and recreational activities.

VISION

The managing partners will:

- operate in an atmosphere of openness and willing cooperation;

- set goals that serve the mission;

- base management decisions on the best available scientific knowledge emphasizing evaluations of previous actions;

- restore degraded natural systems and emphasize natural processes in management practices;

- manage human activities to protect natural and sensitive resources;

- promote public participation in educational and management activities to foster an understanding of and support for the CPNA's resources, mission, and role in conserving our Natural Heritage, for the future.

The mission is the guiding principle for management of the CPNA and will not change significantly over time. The vision describes some important guidelines and strategies that will help us toward our mission. Both the mission and vision guide the formation of short-term goals within management plans. Proposed goals within this and subsequent plans should be pursued under the guidelines of the vision and should result in tangible progress toward achieving our mission.

The primary intent of the stated mission is to conserve the biological integrity of the CPNA. Biological integrity includes the concept of biological diversity, defined as the variety and variability among living organisms and the ecological complexes in which they occur, and the occurrence of all ecological processes at appropriate rates. In other words, the CPNA will exhibit high biological integrity if it conserves the complete spectrum of integrated, adaptive indigenous species and communities subject to natural evolutionary and biogeographic processes. These ideas reflect the managing partners decision to manage for the entirety of biodiversity and not solely for a few species.

Large numbers of a single species may be attained if intensive management scenarios designed solely to maximize the numbers of that species are implemented over large areas, yet the intent of the managing partners is not to maintain spurious or incomplete ecosystems in this way.

Maintaining artificially high densities of a species may increase the likelihood of local extinctions due to resource depletion, disease outbreaks, and extreme population fluctuations and crashes. Conversely, allowing a native, listed, or primary management species to reach extremely low levels also raises the likelihood of local extinction. The managing partners have determined that maintaining self-sustaining populations of listed species within the framework of biological integrity is the best the CPNA can do to contribute to recovery. Operating under these principles, we hope to allow a functioning system to help define and maintain healthy self-sustaining populations of the full spectrum of indigenous species; including endangered and threatened species through natural evolutionary processes, thereby eventually minimizing the need for direct human intervention.

Within this framework, however, there exists potential for conflict between balancing the immediate need for endangered species recovery, mandated by the Endangered Species Act, and the needs of other elements and processes. For instance, intensive land management, such as high grazing pressure, may be considered necessary for maintaining some listed species populations even though it could be detrimental to other species and ecosystem process. Nevertheless, continuing intensive management of some areas may at times be necessary until it can be determined how best to integrate them into the management of biological integrity overall. Continuing intensive habitat management for listed species that interferes with other native species or ecosystem processes should therefore be considered a temporary emergency measure. The extent of this intensive management will be determined by evaluating factors such as the risk of no action. The extent of this intensive management will be determined by evaluating factors such as the risk of no action, time and budget constraints, severity of management needed, severity of detriment to other species and communities, and the amount of space required for security.

A. Issues & Constraints

A variety of issues and ownerships within the CPNA present challenges to management. Laws, regulations and existing rights can pose further complications.

Listed species conservation was an underlying issue which drove the initial concept of establishing a natural area. In the beginning, it seemed relatively simple: protect an area and the species will recover. As time passed, all those who dealt with these issues have come to realize that it isn't that simple. Other questions, ranging from "how much is enough" to "is active restoration and maintenance of biotic communities adequate to protect listed species?" come to the fore, with few clear-cut answers.

Using domestic livestock grazing as a tool for managing listed species and assisting native community re-establishment is an issue that has generated much debate. Extent and type of research required for adequate understanding of species and ecosystems have also become issues.

A variety of recreational activities will be carefully considered and some types will be permitted throughout or in some parts of the CPNA. These will be coordinated through public contact and

education include balancing recreational needs and uses with the overall well-being of the area. Coordination with private individuals, agencies and organizations with a multitude of interests is an ongoing process.

Issues concerning extractive, consumptive or public uses, including oil and gas development, geophysical exploration, recreation, grazing and other land use authorizations that may be permitted must be carefully considered and balanced with resources that could sustain adverse impacts from such uses. The public demands that the resources be carefully weighed against the risk of environmental damage from permitting some of these activities.

Acquisition of remaining private inholdings is unlikely to be resolved. Several of the remaining smaller parcels are owned by individuals or families. Management of the CPNA and its inclusions of private inholdings and adjacent private land ownership patterns will require intense coordination.

Unauthorized uses and illegal activities such as unauthorized grazing, dumping trash and hazardous materials, poaching, destruction of cultural resources and a wide variety of other activities detrimental to the well-being of the area must be dealt with. Law enforcement action must be used in situations which are impacting cultural resources, biotic communities and resources and public safety.

Prescribed burns, wildfires and various fire suppression techniques may be beneficial or detrimental to the fragile ecosystems of the area. Wildfires are to be controlled using the least impacting method possible unless it threatens life or private properties.

Constraints, broadly defined as limitations or restrictions on management actions, affect virtually all issues contained within this management plan. These constraints take the form of Executive Orders, acts, laws, statutes, regulations, land classifications, land use ordinances, Resource Management Plans, land management plans, Memoranda of Understanding, existing rights and funding. Most of the legal requirements are promulgated by either the United States Congress, the California Legislature or the California Fish and Game Commission. San Luis Obispo (SLO) County has legal jurisdiction (land use practices and building codes) over TNC property within the area. The BLM and DFG are exempt from County regulations based on the principle of superior entities.

Where applicable, the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the California Endangered Species Act (CESA), the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are the primary constraints affecting actions in the CPNA.

There are a range of laws and regulations designed to provide protection for resources that may define management options.

B. Acquisition History

In early 1984, TNC and the BLM agreed to explore the possibility of acquiring extensive lands in the Carrizo Plain region. This land, to be set aside for preservation and restoration, and would function as a single, large "macropreserve" for rare and endangered San Joaquin Valley (SJV) species, as well as other common components of SJV vegetation and wildlife. Several workshops were held between TNC, BLM, the DFG and the USFWS to determine strategies and priorities for acquisition of these lands.

A steering committee was formed in late 1985 to guide the conceptual development of the project that eventually metamorphosed into the CPNA. Committee members included staffs from BLM, DFG, USFWS, TNC, the California Energy Commission (CEC), SLO County, Kern County, the National Audubon Society, the University of California at Riverside, energy and mineral companies with holdings in the region and several members of the local public (Appendix A). This committee met over the course of two years to develop support from State and Federal governments as well as local political and advocacy groups. It also worked to secure Federal, State and private funding to purchase and manage the CPNA.

In January 1988, TNC purchased 82,000 acres of the Carrizo Plain from Oppenheimer Industries. BLM received funding from Congress in 1988 to acquire 23,000 acres in 1988 and another 28,500 acres in 1989. The California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) purchased 3,000 acres from TNC in December 1988 and 2,500 acres in 1989 to be managed by DFG. Additional properties of the Goodwin Ranch were purchased by TNC in December 1988. The BLM has acquired another 13,000 acres through exchange or purchase. An objective of the CPNA is to acquire the remaining private lands from willing sellers, or purchase conservation easements on private lands.

As of 1995, surface ownership within the CPNA is a mixture of BLM, State, TNC, and other private owners (Table 1).

TABLE 1
LAND OWNERSHIP

BLM.....	199,028 acres
DFG.....	6,360 acres
TNC.....	6,369 acres
Other private owners.....	41,871 acres
Total.....	253,628 acres

The great majority of the mineral estate ownership on acquired lands is still private. TNC is a partial owner in the mineral estate of the largest block of acquired lands, the former Oppenheimer ranches. Almost all of the landowners that have sold land to the managing partners have retained the entire mineral estate or the oil and gas rights, speculating that future discovery may pay off as it has in the Taft area, just a few miles to the east. Future private land sellers are also expected to retain at least the oil and gas rights.

Of the approximately 42,000 acres of private land remaining, the 23,000 acres is part of the Bidart Brothers ranch. The other 19,000 acres includes many parcels ranging in size from approximately 800 acres to 1/2 acre. There are four small subdivisions covering approximately 1700 acres. These subdivisions have parcels of 20 acres or smaller, but the great majority of them are undeveloped. There are approximately 145 separate land parcels remaining in the CPNA.



Saucito Ranch House